

THOUGHTS
ON DEVOTION TO
THE SACRED HEART,
AND ALSO ON
THE LIFE AND WORK
OF OUR
BLESSED LORD.

BY

Right Rev. JOHN WALSH, D. D.,
Bishop of London, Ontario.

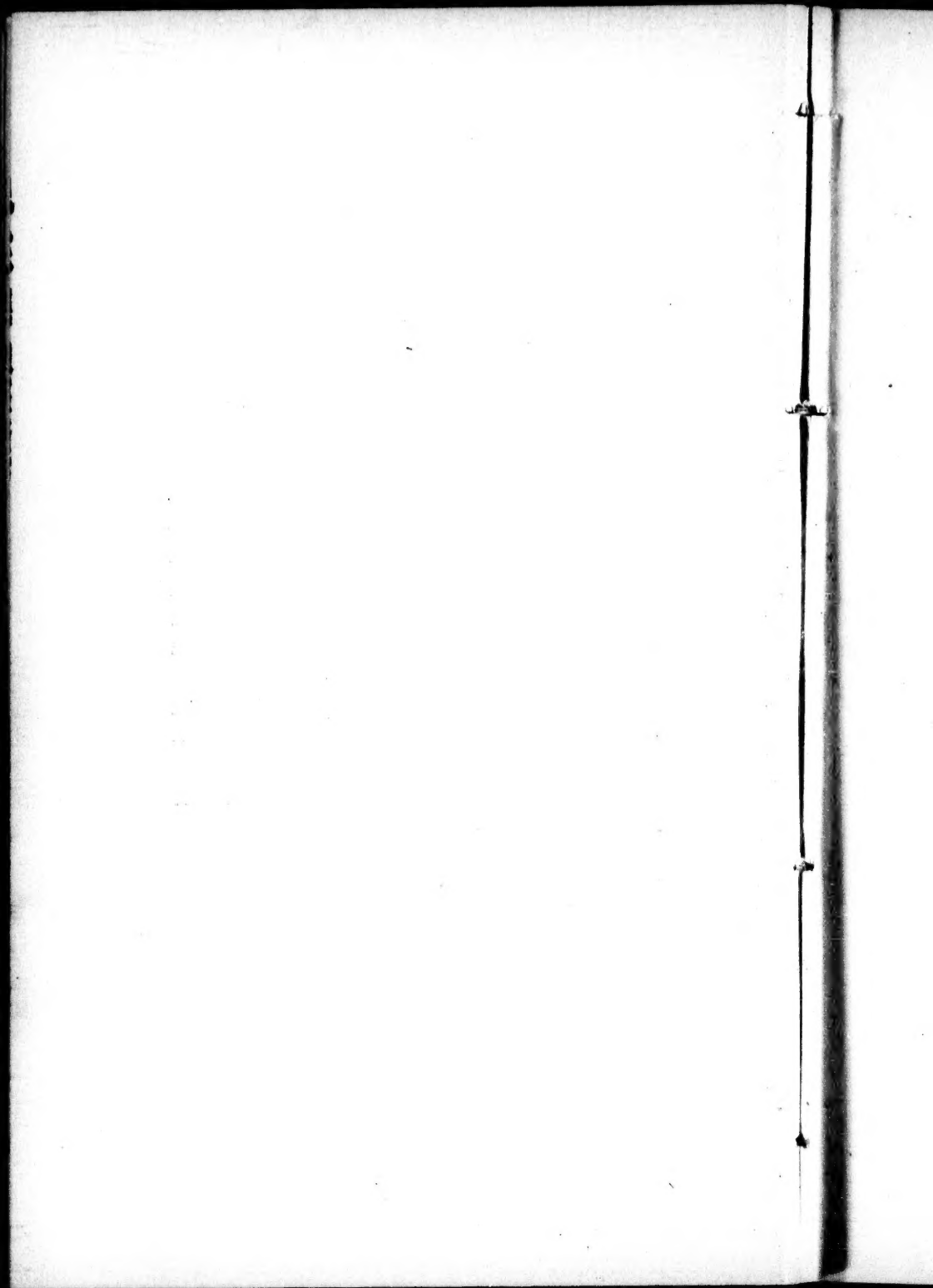
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P R E F A C E.

The following "Thoughts" were written for the edification and instruction of the flock committed to our care. Some friends have urged us to consent to their publication in their present form, in the hope that they might in this way reach a greater number of readers, and might perhaps help to promote, in a wider sphere, devotion to the "Sacred Heart," and love and gratitude to our Blessed Lord, in all the manifestations of His infinite goodness and love. In this hope and for this sole purpose are they published. They are preceded by the late Denis Florence McCarthy's beautiful lines on "The Consecration of Ireland to the Sacred Heart," the perusal of which will doubtless afford our readers pleasure and profit.

LONDON, ONTARIO,
Feast of the Annunciation,
1884.



IRELAND'S CONSECRATION
TO
THE SACRED HEART.

BY DENIS FLORENCE MACCARTHY.

Where'er beneath the Saving Rood
The nation kneels to pray,
A holy bond of brotherhood
Unites us all to-day;
From North to South, from East to West,
From circling sea to sea,
Ierne bares her bleeding breast,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

She bares her breast, which many a wound,
Which many a blow made sore,
What time the martyred Mother swooned
Insensate in her gore.

But, ah, she could not die; no! no!
One germ of life had she—
The love that twined through weal, through
woe,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

She gave her sighs, she gave her tears
To Thee, O Heart divine!
She gave her blood, for countless years,
Like water or like wine;
And now that in her horoscope
A happier fate we see;
She consecrates her future hope,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

She consecrates her glorious past—
For glorious 'tis, though sad,
Bright, though with many a cloud o'er-
cast;
Though gloomy, yet how glad!
For through the wilds that round her
spread,
How darksome they might be,
One light along the desert led,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

She consecrates her dark despair,
 Though brightened from above—
She consecrates her Patrick's prayer—
 Her Bridget's burning love—
Her Brendan sailing over seas,
 That none had dared but he—
These, and a thousand such as these,
 O Sacred Heart to Thee!

And even the present, though it be,
 Alas! unwisely sage—
Its icy-cold philosophy,
 Its stained historic page,
Its worship of brute force and strength
 That leaves no impulse free—
She hopes to consecrate at length,
 O Sacred Heart to Thee!

But oh! forgive what I have said—
 Forgive, O Heart divine!
'Tis Thou hast suffered, Thou hast bled,
 And not this land of mine!
'Tis Thou hast bled for sins untold
 That God alone doth see—
The insults done, so manifold,
 O Sacred Heart to Thee!

For us, but not for us alone,
We consecrate our land,
The holy Pontiff's plundered throne
Doth still our prayers demand;
That soon may end the robber reign,
And soon the Cross be free,
And Rome repentant, turn again,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

One valiant band, O Lord, from us
A special prayer should claim—
The soldiers of Ignatius,
Who bear Thy holy name.
Still guard them on their glorious track,
Still victors let them be,
In leading the lost nations back,
O Sacred Heart to Thee.

Like some tired bird, whose homeward
flight
Reseeks its distant nest,
Ah, let my song once more alight
Upon my country's breast,
There, let it rest, to roam no more—
Avoiding the decree

That lifts my soul, its wanderings o'er,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

Then break, ye circling seas, in smiles,
And sound, ye streams, in song,
Ye thousand ocean-girdled isles,
The joyous strain prolong--
In one grand chorus, Lord, we pray,
With Heaven, and Earth, and Sea,
To consecrate our land to-day,
O Sacred Heart to Thee!

SOME THOUGHTS.

THE profound wisdom and untiring zeal with which our Holy Mother, the Church, prosecutes her sublime mission of saving souls, and of extending the reign of Christ on the earth, is a subject which challenges the admiration and gratitude of mankind. Animated and illumined by the Holy Ghost, who is her life, she puts forth all her heaven-given resources to supply the spiritual wants of man, and to save from eternal ruin, the world redeemed in the precious blood of Christ. Like unto the good shepherd, she goes in search of the lost sheep, tenderly binds up the wounds it received in its wanderings, and with joy brings it home to the shelter of the fold. She gives the food of revealed truth to the hungry intellect, and an all-satisfying object of love to the yearning heart. She has a balm for

every affliction, relief for every misery, and consolation for the dark sorrows that afflict humanity. With the tender care and sleepless vigilance of a fond mother, she watches over our spiritual welfare, and labors to insure our eternal happiness.

As each age has its own special wants, and its own moral epidemics, she draws forth from her inexhaustible treasure-house of grace, the helps that are needed, and the remedies required, for the healing of the sick nations. Hence the various devotions that have ever and anon sprung up in her bosom with all the beauty and variety of summer flowers, putting forth the blossoms and fruits of virtue and sanctity, and filling the air with a perfume of sweetest fragrance, "exhaling the good odor of Christ unto salvation." O, it is good for us to be her children, it is good for us to be with Christ and his apostles on this holy Mount of Thabor, on which we see the entrancing vision of revealed truth and holiness, and the luminous cloud of Christian virtues that

may not be seen amongst the sects below in the mist-covered valley! What child-like innocence; what stainless purity of life, has she not fostered by devotions to Christ's blessed Mother; what countless virgins, pure as the lily, has she not induced to follow the heavenly bridegroom, by holding up to their enraptured gaze, the virgin without stain! How many hearts grown hard in sin has she not melted into deep compunction? what streams of penitential tears has she not caused to flow down the cheeks of sinners by her devotion of the way of the cross? And now that the charity of many has grown cold, that faith has lost its freshness and vigor, that a dead sea of indifferentism has spread abroad over the earth, the holy Church holds up before the eyes of all, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, calls on the perishing world to return to its divine Saviour and live; and behold, many peoples that were indifferent give ear, and the tepid are aroused from their lethargy, and faith revives, and

charity is inflamed, and the "ages of faith" are in many places brought back again.

Let us for a moment dwell on the consideration of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which the holy Church so urgently recommends to her children at this particular time, and we shall find that the object and end of this devotion are such, as to appeal with a mighty power to the heart and conscience of every Christian; are such as to draw the soul as with the cords of Adam and the bands of love to the foot of the cross, and to its merciful and loving Saviour, who on that blessed rood purchased it with a great price, and died a cruel death that it might have everlasting life.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus was always an object of devotion and adoration in the Church, for it is the Heart of the God-Man, and is deified by its hypostatic union with the Divinity. This devotion is the same in substance as that which is paid to the adorable person of Jesus Christ whose Sacred Heart was the seat and center of His ineffable love for us.

Christ was very God and very Man. His human and divine natures were perfectly distinct, and yet were hypostatically united in the adorable person of our blessed Redeemer, the second person of the most blessed Trinity. The divinity and humanity do not separately, but unitedly exist in the person of Christ, and neither the one nor the other exclusively exists in any part of His glorious person, the union of the two natures being a real indissoluble and eternal union. This is the teaching of the Church on this important subject, and it follows from it, that each part of our Lord's sacred body is equally worthy of adoration, from its personal union with the Divinity, but we are sometimes more powerfully moved by the contemplation of one part than by that of another. In the language of mankind, the heart is said to be the seat of the affections. The soul operates principally upon the heart, and hence we ascribe to the heart the various affections and emotions of the soul. Hence it is that God, accomodating

Himself to our human notions, commands us to love Him "with our whole hearts." The Heart of Jesus contains the fullness of the divine and human nature, in it "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally" (Collos. II. c. v. 9). It loved us from the first moment of the Incarnation, and will love us for evermore. Since the time it was pierced by the lance of the Roman soldier, it was an object of the deep vehement love of His children, and together with the blood and water, there flowed with them the full tide of God's graces and mercies on the world. St. Augustine says, the side of Jesus was opened for him by the lance, and that he entered in and abode in the Sacred Heart as in a place of secure refuge. St. Bernard writes in sentiments of most tender devotion concerning the Heart of Jesus. St. Thomas of Aquin pictured that most loving heart as wounded for our sins, and pouring out through the opening its precious blood, to show the excess of His love, and to inflame with His love the

tepid hearts of His disciples. St. Bernardine of Siena, speaks of this divine Heart as "a furnace of the most ardent love, capable of setting the whole world on fire." "O love!" cries out St. Francis of Sales, "O sovereign love of the Heart of Jesus! What heart can praise and bless Thee as Thou dost deserve! Let this adorable Heart live forever in our hearts."

In adoring the Sacred Heart, we adore Jesus Himself, the figure of the Father's substance, and the splendor of His glory; we adore Him whom the angels and saints adore in Heaven, of whom, when coming into the world, it was said, "let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. ch. iv. vi.) We adore and love our dearest Redeemer, our God and our All, our first beginning and last end, Him, who for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven and became man, who stooped into the abyss of our nothingness in assuming human nature, "emptied Himself," says St. Paul, "taking the form of

a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man; He humbled Himself, becoming obedient, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ch. 2, vii. viii.) We adore that divine and loving Heart, every throb and beat of which were for our salvation and happiness, the Heart of Him who broke not the bruised reed, and the smoking flax did not extinguish, who was the friend of publicans and sinners. We adore that divine Heart, which still, in the sacrament of the altar, abides with us in this valley of tears to cheer our exile, to dry up the tears of our sorrow, to heal the wounded heart, to dart into our bosoms the flames of divine charity that glow and burn in It, and to cast on the cold, bleak earth, the fire of love which Christ came upon the earth to enkindle. Well may we cry out with the Church, "*O Felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum, meruit habere Redemptorem.*" O, happy sin which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer, whose Sacred Heart abides with us

forever. "*O, mira circa nos tuæ pietatis dignatio.*" O, wonderful and ineffable condescension of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for us! What heart so cold as not to return It love for love, what bosom so dead to gratitude and to all the noble impulses of our nature as not to be forever loyal and true to It! If I forget thee, O Sacred Heart, let my right hand be forgotten, let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not make thee the beginning of my joys and the burden of my praise. "As the heart panteth after the fountains of waters, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God; my soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God" (Ps. 41), wherein the Heart of Jesus abides in the sacrament of His love. Such are the sentiments that must fill the soul, such the ardent desires and the vehement longings for Heaven and for God, that must inflame all who contemplate and adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

But we not only adore the Sacred Heart as being a principal part of the adorable body of our Lord, we also profoundly adore the infinite abysmal love of God for us, of which the Sacred Heart is a living symbol. The love the incarnate God bore us is an unfathomable abyss, which the plummet-line of human intelligence can never fathom. The prophet said of the sorrow of our crucified Lord, that it was as great as the sea. We may also truly say, that his love for us was as vast, as deep, as boundless, as the ocean. St. Paul is ravished with transports of joy as he contemplates, with all the saints, "the breadth and length and height and depth of the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all understanding" (Eph. ch. III. v. xviii). The Sacred Heart reminds us forcibly of the infinite love, which brought the Son of God down from Heaven to redeem us; which induced Him to become poor that He might make us rich with the riches of Heaven; which caused Him to spend thirty-three years here on earth, in poverty, humiliation, and sufferings,

for our sakes—of that ineffable and tender love that animated the Good Shepherd, that forgave the Magdalen, that burned in the bosom of the father of the prodigal—of that compassionate love that moved Him to shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, over the doomed city of Jerusalem, and over thousands of unrepenting souls, of which Jerusalem is the type—that dried the tears of the widow of Naim, and restored the buried Lazarus to the embraces of his sisters—of that all-embracing love that excluded no child of Adam from its circle, not even the cruel enemies that flogged and crucified the Redeemer, and put Him to death: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:”—of that love that would gather His children around Him, even as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. The love of the Sacred Heart is a persevering love—He was made man through love for us, and from the moment of His incarnation to His death, He never ceased to love us. He died to teach us his love, and sitting

at the right of His Father in the glory of Heaven He loves us still, always living to make intercession for us, and on the countless altars of Catholicity He loves us with undying love in the most holy sacrament; it is a patient love which waits for our conversion, pleads with us to give Him our hearts, pursues us in our wanderings, and brings us back to the fold rejoicing—an imperial, omnipotent love, that broke the scepter of death, that destroyed the empire of the grave, that plucked from death its sting, and from hell its bite, and flung open for His children the gates of Heaven, and prepared a place for us in the many mansions of His Father's house—in fine, it is the love of the best of fathers, of the most affectionate of brothers, of the most devoted of friends: “I have called you my friends;” “Go tell my brothers that I will meet them in Galilee.” O, ineffable love, inflame our tepid hearts with the love of thee! O, Sacred Heart of Jesus, we implore, that we may ever love thee more and more.

The end aimed at by the Church in establishing the devotion to the Sacred Heart is, to promote God's glory, to destroy the reign of s.n, and to inflame the hearts of men with the fire of divine charity. This devotion is also intended to make reparation to our Lord, for the cold neglect and ingratitude with which He is treated in the blessed sacrament. But its principal aim is, to cause His love to be loved. The mission of Jesus Christ upon the earth, was to enkindle therein the fire of divine love. I have come, said He, to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled (St. Luke, ch. 12, v. xlix.)

When our blessed Lord came in the incarnation, He found the world steeped in corruption, and enveloped in the thick night of paganism; it was a huge, lifeless carcass, with the coldness and palor of spiritual death upon it. Everything therein was worshiped save the true God, and He was an outlaw in His own creation. Our divine Redeemer came, enkindled in far distant Galilee the

fire of divine love, and behold, this fire flames out and spreads from east to west, until it embraced the world in its divine flames; until it purged and purified the earth, and made it a new creation; and in the words of Holy Writ, "renewed the face of the earth." When the Sacred Heart began to beat and palpitate in the world, the idols fell shattered from their pedestals, the oracles became dumb, the multifarious errors of paganism disappeared like a wrack of storm clouds before the rising sun, and regenerate man rose from the grave of spiritual death, and his heart was changed and warmed into a new life: "was not our heart burning within us whilst He spake in the way (Luke ch. 24, v. xxxii). The patrician and plebeian, the noble lady and lowly handmaid, the soldier and civilian, men and women of every state and social grade, leave all for the love of Christ, because Christ first loved them, and died for their salvation. "The charity of Christ constrains us (says St. Paul), judging

this, that if one died for all, then all were dead; and Christ died for all, that they also who live may not live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again (II Cor. ch. 5, v. xiv. xv)."

But, alas! the fervor and the love of God that distinguished the early Christians have disappeared. The times are now dark and menacing; false and wicked principles are in the ascendant; society is out of joint; the thrones that are still erect are tottering to their fall; the apostles of a degrading and unchristian philosophy are inoculating the world with the deadly poison of their false and pernicious teachings; men are turning their backs on the Christian Church and on the broken rays of truth that are yet reflected through the shattered mirror of Protestant Christianity, and are venturing out on the sea of life without chart or compass or guiding star, to be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of false doctrines, and to be finally wrecked as to their eternal happiness.

Never, perhaps, since the first promulgation of the Gospel, was the spirit of the world more dominant amongst mankind than it is at present. Society is wounded to the core. Great moral plague spots disfigure and putrefy it and eat and rot their way to its very heart. The insatiable thirst for gold, the idolatry of wealth, the practical ignoring of an eternal world, the worldly wisdom that now, as in the days of St. Paul, scoffs at the folly of the Cross and at the virtues which it symbolizes—these are the characteristics of our times, and they certainly are of the earth earthly, and directly antagonistic to the spirit of Christ and the teachings of the Gospel. Schools have been taken from under the protection and guardianship of religion, and have been stripped of their Christian character. The godless education imparted therein is fast dechristianizing modern society. It is true that this system of godless education aims at the cultivation of the intellect and the diffusion of knowledge, but it leaves the heart a moral wilderness,

overgrown with rank poisonous weeds and noxious plants. Under the baneful influence of this unchristian education, children are growing up without piety, without respect for parents, without veneration for old age, without obedience to civil or ecclesiastical authority. They are fast realizing the truth of the description given by St. Paul of those who in his day banished God from education: "And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense to do those things which are not convenient, proud, haughty inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy." (Rom. 1, xxviii). Another dreadful evil of the time is the doctrine and practice of divorce. This evil aims a death blow at the very life of civil and religious society. The family is the germ of all other societies, the base of the social fabric, the well-spring from which civil and religious societies take their rise, the corner-stone of Church and State. For

what is the State but an organization of a certain number of families under the authority of a common chief, for the protection of life and liberty, and for the pursuit of happiness? And what is the Church but an organization of Christian families under the guidance and authority of a common father, for the protection and development of their spiritual life? Hence, what the root is to the tree, what the fountain is to the river that flows from it, what the foundation is to the edifice that springs up from it in shape and beauty, that the family is to the State and to the Church. From it the former receives its citizens, the latter its children. It follows, therefore, that whatever affects the conservation and well-being of the family, affects also the conservation and well-being of society at large. Whatever affects its honor, its purity, its sanctity, affects also the honor, purity and welfare of the human race, and touches the very apple of its eye. Now, as society rests on the family, even so

the family rests upon marriage and derives from it the origin of its life, its continuance, and its character. It is, therefore, evident that the doctrine and practice of divorce, inasmuch as they dissolve the unity and indissolubility of marriage, divest it of its Christian character, and rob it of its honor, its purity, and sanctities, destroy the family life, poison the well-springs of society, and sap the very foundations of the civil as well as of the religious order. The records of the divorce Courts in Europe and America show the fearful, wide spread prevalence of this moral plague which is ravaging society.

Such, is an imperfect picture of the moral condition of the world of to-day. We may ask with the prophet, "*Quis medebitur ejus?*" What beneficent power can heal a world so deeply wounded, so desperately diseased? We answer: The Catholic Church and she alone, by virtue of the divine power that is in her, can heal the diseases of the moral world, and

bind up its wounds. She is the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Her doctrines are the teachings of the truths which Jesus Christ has revealed for the life of the world; her sacraments are the channels through which, in life-giving streams, the graces and merits of Christ are poured abroad for the salvation and sanctification of mankind. She redeemed the world from the errors and corruption of Paganism, and she has still the same inherent divine power to effect moral reformations. She converted the Roman Empire to Christianity, and when that Empire fell to pieces beneath the blows of the northern barbarians, she went abroad amid the ruins, armed with a creative power; she breathed the breath of life into the chaotic mass that lay before her, and up sprang her own beautiful creation known in history as Christendom. There are no moral evils for which she has not a divine remedy; there are no afflictions for which she has not a healing balm; there are no profound sorrows of the

human heart for which she has not Christ-like consolations; there are no dark problems of life for which she has not the solution, no doubts and questionings of the human soul for which she has not the most satisfying answers. The wonders which, by the power of Christ, who is her indwelling and abiding life, she wrought in the past in the conversion and sanctification of mankind, she can still repeat, if she be allowed the freedom to fulfill her divine mission. But the Church of God is not free to do so in many countries which need most sorely the skill and medicine of the Heavenly Physician.

She is thwarted and opposed in her divine mission. In many countries which she redeemed from barbarism and paganism, and which had once shown resplendent with the reflected light of her truths and the beauty of her holiness, she is now bound and imprisoned or driven into exile. She is stricken in her head and members. The Vicar of Christ is dethroned and discrowned. He is

practically a prisoner and at the mercy of his enemies. He exercises the functions of his august office only by the toleration of a hostile and usurping power; and the Father of the Faithful, to avenge whose wrongs a million swords, flashing the light of battle, would, in other days, have leaped from their scabbards, is robbed of his liberty and rights, and is made dependent on the contributions of the faithful for the support of his dignity and for the means of enabling him to exercise his divine ministry. Kings and governments co-operated with, or regarded with shameful indifference, the monstrous and sacrilegious crime by which the Vicar of Christ was reduced to this sad and deplorable condition; but in co-operating with, or in conniving at this crime, they have, Samson-like in their blind folly, torn down in whelming ruins the pillars that support the temple of their authority and power. In the dethronement of the Vicar of Christ the majesty of kings, the security of thrones, the authority of gov-

ernments, the stability of states, and the safety of society have been in principle dethroned and overthrown, and that principle is now, alas, in fatal and active operation in the world, and kings and rulers may well turn pale at the decrees of destruction which it is writing with the hand of fate on their palatial walls. But not only is the Church stricken in her head; she is also stricken in her members. In several countries of Europe the religious orders—the body-guards of the Church—have been suppressed, and their members dispersed and driven into exile; their colleges and schools have been closed; their charitable institutions have had their doors sealed against the indigent and suffering; their blessed ministrations amongst the poor, the ignorant, and the afflicted have been compelled to cease, “and the ways of Sion mourns; her gates are broken down, her priests sigh, her virgins are in affliction, and she is oppressed with bitterness” (Lamen. 1. iv. vi).

In the presence of these appalling evils the Church turns to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, even as the Apostles did when the storm raged on the Sea of Galilee, and the angry waves threatened to submerge the bark of Peter, and she says to It, "Lord, save us, we perish." "Sacred Heart of Jesus, save society from the deluge of evils that threaten to destroy it, save a perishing world from the ruin toward which it is fast hastening, enkindle the fire of Thy divine love in the cold breasts of men. Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and be not angry with us forever; let not my enemies prevail against me, nor the son of ungodly have power to hurt me, and let not the gates of hell prevail against me!"

The Sacred Heart is a secure harbor to the Church from the angry storms of persecution that now so fiercely assail her. It is true the Church is indestructible and can neither decay nor perish, for she is indissolubly united with the Holy Ghost, who is her life,

and this union is eternal. I will send you, said Our Lord, another paraclete, the spirit of truth, to abide with you forever (St. John, ch. 14. v. xvi). And again, He said to His Apostles, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (St. Matt. ch. xxviii. v. xx). "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her" (St. Matt. ch. xvi. v. xviii).

The Church Catholic is that immortal kingdom seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his vision of the night, and of which Daniel prophesied: "But in the days of those kingdoms the God of Heaven will set up another kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces; and shall consume all these kingdoms, and, ITSELF SHALL STAND FOREVER" (Dan. ch. ii. v. xlv).

Nations may disappear, dynasties may be overthrown, the proudest thrones may be shattered into fragments, but the Church of

the living God shall live on forever, in all the freshness and vigor of youth. Princes may conspire against her mission and her very life, but their hopes shall be scattered like the chaff of the threshing floor, and their wicked machinations brought to naught; He that is in Heaven said: "Psalmist shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them" (Rom. ch. ii. v. iv). "No weapon," said the prophet, "that is formed against her shall prosper, and every tongue that resisted her, in judgment she shall condemn" (Isa. ch. xlv. v. xviii). This is our faith and consolation in the midst of an unbelieving and hostile world. But in the presence of the widespread indifferentism and impiety that now prevail; in the presence of the faint-heartedness, tepidity and worldliness, that exist among the children of the Church; in presence of the bitter persecution that now rages against the spouse of Christ and His Vicar, what are we to do? We must turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for it is the very shrine of sanctification and

beating. If a virtue went forth from the hem of His garment which cured a painful and chronic disease, if the handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched the body of St. Paul, caused "the diseases" to depart from the sick, as we read was the case in the Acts of the Apostles, if, "the shadow" of Peter passing by delivered men from their infirmities, surely the virtue and healing influences that flow from the Heart of Jesus are sufficient to cure this age, that is sick and sore, and diseased to the very heart. Our help and our hope then lie in that wounded Heart, whence salvation first streamed down with its own precious blood on mankind. It is our sheet-anchor of hope in these unhappy times. When St. Gertrude was favored with a vision of St. John the Evangelist, and asked him why he had not revealed *all* the beatings of the Heart of our Lord, since he had felt them all himself when leaning on His bosom, he replied, "*that the full persuasive sweetness of the beatings of that Heart was reserved*

to be revealed at a later time, when the world should have grown old and sunk in tepidity, that it might be thus re-kindled and re-awakened to the love of God!"

Oh, we must then turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and implore it to cast its divine fire of love on the frozen earth once more, so that the winter of our desolation may pass away, and the springtime of holy hope and fervor may come back again; we must implore It to breathe the breath of life into the numberless souls that, Lazarus-like, lie dead in the grave of sin, that they may arise to a life of grace and virtue; we must beseech It to banish from the children of the Church all spiritual sloth and unconcern in God's holy service, and in the all-important work of their salvation, to inflame their hearts with divine love, to enliven their faith, to strengthen their hope, and to enlarge their charity; and finally, we must beseech the Sacred Heart to restore peace and liberty to the persecuted Church and the Supreme Pon-

tiff. When St. Peter was in prison, a prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him (Acts ch. xii. v. v), and an angel of the Lord struck the chains from his hands and feet, flung open the prison gates, and set him free; and so, if we pray ardently, confidently, and perseveringly to the Sacred Heart for the Church and our Holy Father, their grievous trials in God's own time will cease. A Christian philosopher has remarked, that a nation that prays is always heard, and so, when the Church, the great nation of regenerated humanity, implores God to hasten the triumph of the bride of Christ, and to scatter her enemies, we may rest assured that that prayer will not remain unheard. For this two-fold end, viz., first:—Of enkindling in our hearts the fire of divine charity, so that we may walk in justice and holiness before God all the days of our life; and, second:—Of beseeching God to hasten the triumph of the Church over her enemies; we should consecrate ourselves, our thoughts, our words,

our actions, in a word, our whole lives to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and should place ourselves under the ægis of Its blessed protection; and we should also earnestly and perseveringly endeavor to propagate this most salutary devotion, and in this way help to spread abroad the good odor of Christ unto salvation.

The apostleship of the Sacred Heart can be exercised by laymen as well as by priests, by men and women, by old and young, by people in the world as by the religious in the shelter of the cloister; it is a blessed, a fruitful and most meritorious apostleship—it cannot fail to do good, it cannot fail to convert sinners, to console the afflicted, to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds, to warm hearts with the fire of divine love, and to sanctify immortal souls; it cannot, in fine, fail to effect a moral and beautiful transfiguration in the Church and Society, to the glory of God and the salvation of man, whilst it will bring the rewards of eternal life to all who are engaged in it—"They," says the prophet,

"who teach others unto justice, shall shine
as stars for all eternity" (Daniel, xii. iii).



REFLECTIONS
ON THE
LIFE AND WORK
OF
OUR BLESSED LORD.

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There is no more fruitful source of instruction and edification than the study of the life and actions of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He is the way, the truth and the life; they that follow Him walk not in darkness." (St. John 14, vi). "He is the light of the world and the salt of the earth." "There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved." (Acts iv. xii). He is the model and pattern which we must imitate in our lives and actions if we would be saved, "for," in the language of St Paul, "whom God foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His

Son." (Romans viii. xxix). The knowledge of Him is eternal life. He is our consolation, our hope, our happiness and our supreme good; "for what have we in Heaven," said the Psalmist, "and besides Him what can we desire upon earth; He is the God of our heart and the God that is our portion forever." Psalm lxxii.

The study of the life of Jesus was the constant occupation of the saints; it formed their character and gave them the supernatural courage and strength by which they overcame the world, the devil and the flesh. St. Paul was so preoccupied with it that he professed to know nothing else—"for I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1st Corinthians, 11, ii). And again, "Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." (Philippians, 3, viii). It was the knowledge of our Blessed Saviour that inflamed the heart of the great apostle with divine love and

with the fire of apostolic zeal. He burned to impart this saving knowledge to mankind, and on his bended knees besought the eternal Father that He would communicate it to a perishing world, in order to save and to sanctify it—"For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His spirit with might into the inward man; that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God," (Ephesians 3, xiv-xix).

The more we study the character of our Saviour, the more brightly its divine beauty will shine out upon us, the more vividly the grand characteristics that stamped his mis-

sion as divine will present themselves to view. And it is well to study attentively this heavenly picture, it is profitable to look now on the face of our Christ, and, Veronica-like, to catch the divine image and stamp it on our hearts. We live at a time when a heartless and a blasphemous philosophy is attempting to sap the foundations of Christian faith, and to rob the world of the blessings and consolations of the Christian religion. Hence, it is essential, in order to heal the bites of this fiery serpent of an anti-christian philosophy and an anti-christian spirit, or to save ourselves from their destructive influences, to look upon Him who was foreshadowed by the brazen serpent in the desert, even our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who alone can save us from the spiritual dangers that surround us, and heal the wounds of the soul. But who can adequately describe the life and character of our Blessed Lord? or what pen can do them justice? It is said that a great painter once undertook to paint

the likeness of our Saviour. He had made a long and patient and prayerful study of the subject, his heart and his mind were full of it, his soul was aglow with the fire of a holy inspiration and with the light of artistic genius, he seized at last his brush, with the purpose of transferring to canvas the divine lineaments of our Saviour's countenance; but, alas, his heart failed him, his hand trembled, and, casting down the brush in despair, he exclaimed that it was indeed impossible for mortal man to express on canvas the divine beauty, majesty, and sweetness of the face of Jesus. A kindred feeling may well lay hold of the writer who undertakes to describe the life of our Blessed Lord, and the characteristics that marked his mission on earth. However, as men, in order to see and admire the beauty and brilliancy of a diamond, will turn it now on one side, now on another, so by the aid of study and pious meditation, we may catch some glimpses of the heavenly perfection of our Lord's charac-

ter, and may be able to convey some idea of the characteristics of His mission amongst mankind.

The constraining power that brought our Saviour down from heaven was His infinite love for man. He had created man through love, He came to redeem him through love. When man fell by the original transgression he lost the justice and innocence in which he had been constituted, he lost the sonship of God and the heirship of heaven; he became an outcast from the face of his God, and the gates of heaven were closed against him; he became a ruin and a wreck, like some beautiful temple overthrown by a sudden earthquake; his mind was darkened, his heart corrupted, his inclinations tended to evil as streams tend to the ocean, and he was condemned to the death, not only of the body, but to the everlasting death of the soul. Who can heal this wounded, blighted creature—*Quis medebitur ejus?* Who can undo these appalling evils? What mighty and

beneficent power can lift up fallen man and restore him to his lost privileges? Who can atone to the justice of God for the sins of men, and reconcile the guilty creature to the offended Creator? What mighty arm can unbolt the gates of heaven, and open them once more for man's admission into eternal joys? We find the answer to these questions in the mystery of the Incarnation. Our Blessed Saviour came down from heaven and became man in order to redeem and save us. "He emptied Himself," says St. Paul, "and took upon Himself the form of a servant;" He stooped into the abyss of our nothingness in order to lift us up, and to make us once more the children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The fact of the Incarnation is a miracle of love far beyond the reach of human comprehension. The infinite condescension of God, implied in the Incarnation—the great and eternal God, infinitely perfect in all his attributes, all-powerful, all-holy, all-wise, and all-just, stooping into the

depths of our nothingness to save us; this is an abyss of mercy which the plummet-line of human reason can never fathom. Now we find that His whole life and conduct on earth were but the expression and manifestation of this infinite love and mercy as revealed to us in the fact of the Incarnation.

When St. John was in prison for having denounced the public sins of Herod, he heard of the works of our Saviour, who had just entered on His public life, and sending his disciples to Jesus, he said to Him: "Art thou He that was to come, or look we for another?" And Jesus, making answer, said to them: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." (Matt. 11, ii-v).

Our Blessed Saviour does **not** appeal in proof of His Messiahship to stupendous miracles that startle and terrify. He could have shown in a thousand ways the power that be-

longed to Him in heaven and on earth; His voice could have controlled all the elements, arrested the motions of the heavenly bodies, and suspended all the laws of nature. He could in this way have amply proved His divinity, and that He was indeed the Messiah that was to come to save a lost world. But He appeals rather to His works of tender mercy and compassion; He appeals to His beneficent and gracious manifestation of Almighty power in healing the ills that afflict humanity, in relieving the wretched of the crushing burden of their sorrows, in comforting the afflicted, in healing the broken of heart, and binding up their wounds. (Psalm 147, iii.) "Go tell John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

His whole life was marked by the most profound and active sympathy for the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the sorrow-stricken,

and the care-worn and sin-burdened men. His whole Sacred Heart went out to them in tender pity, and in practical and efficacious benevolence. For the poor He had especial affection and tenderness. When our Saviour came on earth, He found the poor crushed, ostracised, despised, and abandoned. The civilization of the Pagan world was then at its height; but it was a cold, heartless civilization; it was like a marble statue by Phidias, exquisitely beautiful and radiant with the halo of artistic genius, but yet hard, cold, unfeeling and pitiless. All its honor and favors were for the rich, the powerful, the learned and the brave. Honors were lavished on the poet, the orator, the sculptor, the successful statesman and the victorious general; but the poor, as we have said, were utterly despised and abandoned; they stood outside the sphere of charity and even of liberty. Our Blessed Lord, who was the way, the truth and the life, came to destroy error, to correct false notions, to teach men the true

value of things and the true relationship of man to man, and to establish society on the basis of truth, justice and charity. He sympathized with the poor, and by practicing and embracing poverty Himself, He made it a sacred thing, and lifted it up in the estimation of mankind. When He condescended to come on earth for our salvation, He might have come clothed with great power and majesty and surrounded by His angels; He might have revealed His law amid the awful scenes that witnessed the revelation and promulgation of the decalogue; He might have spoken His heavenly doctrines in a voice of thunder, and bade the trembling nations to listen and obey. But far different was the plan adopted by our Saviour. He is born in the poverty of a stable, His cradle is a manger, His royal robes coarse swaddling clothes, His retinue an ox and an ass, his luxuries darkness and cold. He grows up in poverty and associates with the poor; He said that whilst the foxes had their holes, and the birds of the air their

nesses, the Son of Man had not whereon to lay His head. He made poverty one of the beatitudes: "blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He thus gave poverty a character of sacredness, exalted it in human estimation, made it an occasion of merit in the eyes of God, and reconciled the poor to their hard lot by lifting up their thoughts toward God's eternal kingdom, which is the heritage of the poor, and in which they will be eternally rich. And lest, in the lapse of ages, His blessed example and teaching on this point might be forgotten and abandoned, and the poor be once again treated with contempt, neglect and cruelty, our Lord identifies Himself with the poor, makes their cause His own, and declares that on the great accounting day our eternal lot will be decided by the manner in which we shall have followed His example, and obeyed and practiced His teachings in relation to the poor. "I was hungry, and ye gave Me to eat; thirsty, and ye gave Me

to drink." And so, in every Christian age, His true followers have esteemed poverty, have deemed it a holy thing, and have made it a duty and a happiness to be merciful and compassionate toward the poor, rendering their lot bearable and contributing toward their happiness. O! who can estimate the countless blessings bestowed on the poor, the lowly and the weak by this example and teaching of our Blessed Lord. The hungry have been fed, the naked clothed, the lonely and abandoned visited, the light of blessed hope has been made to shine in the darkness of the dungeon, the prison doors have opened to the captive, and the reign of blessed charity, with all its mercies and commiserations, has been inaugurated and perpetuated upon earth, making the "land that was desolate and impassable be glad, and the wilderness rejoice and flourish like a lily, making it bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with joy and praise." (Isaias 136).

But our Blessed Lord not only practiced poverty and rendered it sacred, but he also embraced labor and toil as the occupation of His private life, and gave them a dignity and a merit which they had never before enjoyed. At the time of the advent of our Saviour, labor had fallen into utter contempt, was a badge of degradation and considered as only fit for slaves. Working men were deprived of the rights of manhood, were robbed of their liberties and civil rights and were reduced to the position of slaves. Both in Greek and Roman civilization work had been made servile, and working men slaves. At the time of Augustus Cæsar, there were upward of sixty millions of slaves in the vast empire over which he ruled. And those slaves were not men on whose brows an Indian or an African sun had burnt the brand of slavery; they were in blood and race the equals of their masters. In Roman law, a slave was not a person, but a thing; he had, of course, no civil or political rights, he had

no power to receive a legacy, no power of civil action, and was entirely beyond the pale and protection of law; he had not even religious duties or hopes. He was in everything absolutely subject to his master's will, who had the power of life and death over him. Such is the frightful condition to which millions of working men were reduced in ancient civilization, when they were described by Seneca as having "fettered feet, bound hands, and branded faces."

Our divine Saviour became a working man, was a carpenter and the reputed son of a carpenter, and for years labored and toiled with St. Joseph for His daily bread. He thus made labor sacred, He exalted it in human estimation, and gave it a dignity in the eyes of men and a power of merit in the eyes of God. In the Christian system, labor having become ennobled by the action and example of Christ, the working man rose in the scale of human estimation, he ceased to be regarded a thing, and was looked upon

as a man possessing human rights and liberties and duties. Men, whether free or bond, were taught the doctrines of equality before God, who was their common father; they were taught the doctrine of human and Christian brotherhood, that in the language of St. Paul, "in one spirit they were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether *bond or free.*" (1 Corinthians. 12, xiii). "That they were all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, that there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but that they *were* all *one* in Christ Jesus." (Galatians, 3, xxvii-xxviii). These blessed sounds broke with the power and magic of delightful music on the ears of the fettered slaves. Millions of human beings, bowed down under the intolerable burdens and unspeakable sorrows of slavery, lifted up their heads, raised their eyes toward heaven, and began to hope. Gradually, under the blessed and fruitful influence of the example and teachings of our Saviour, the fetters

began to fall from the festering limbs of the slaves, men learned their rights and dignity as well as their responsibilities, labor was ennobled and sanctified, and the curse of slavery has disappeared from all Christian lands, never to return. Who can estimate the value of this mighty result, this great moral revolution! What blessings has it not conferred upon mankind! What fountains of tears has it not dried up! What broken hearts has it not healed! What unspeakable sorrows has it not banished! What burdens of grief has it not lifted up from the heart and soul of man! With what hope, what joy, what sunshine of liberty and gladness has it not flooded the world, transforming it from a pen of slaves into a home of Christian freemen.

Another characteristic of our Lord's earthly mission was His care and tenderness for the sick. His delight was to bring hope to the bed of the sick, to cheer their drooping spirits, to relieve their sufferings and heal their dis-

eases. He cleansed the lepers of their most loathsome disease, and by His healing touch restored their putrid flesh to its original freshness and purity. By His merciful power the blind saw, the lame walked and the deaf heard. Fever, the bloody flux, palsy and the dropsy, every manner of disease that racks the poor body with pain, fills the mind with sad forebodings of death, and finally dries up the very fountains of life, all fled at His omnipotent command, or disappeared at His healing touch. They saw in Him the author of all life, and vanished in confusion from His Holy presence. "And all that were sick, he healed," said St. Matthew (8, xvi-xvii,) "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaias the prophet, saying: '*He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.*'" How beautiful is this characteristic of our Redeemer, and how fruitful it has been in lasting benefits for the sick and the infirm in all the Christian ages! Those who have been ill know how dependent the sick are on the

kindly offices of others, how they crave for sympathy and yearn for one word of hope. The example of our Lord and its blessed influences, have soothed the agonies of the sick bed and lavished sweetest sympathies on the sufferers, and have shed upon them the blessed sunshine of hope. Under the potent creative power of His divine example, men and women have, in every Christian age, devoted themselves exclusively to the care of the sick, for Christ's dear sake, and hospitals have sprung up in every center of population, like blessed Probaticas, for the care and comfort of the sick and suffering.

Then what shall we say of His profound sympathy for the sorrow-stricken and afflicted? He knew that sorrow and suffering would be the portion of the great masses of mankind; that in this valley of tears man would have to drink the chalice of sufferings to the bitter dregs. He, therefore, became a man of sorrows Himself, in order to sanctify sorrow, and to make it holy and even ex-

piatory of sin and its consequences, and in order, also, by the magic power of His example, to teach the sorrow-stricken, in every age, how to carry the burden of their grief, and how to do so in a manner submissive to the will of God, and pleasing to Him. "We have seen Him," said the Prophet, "and there was no comeliness that we should be desirous of him; despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him as a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted; but he was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed." (Isaias 53). And, through the mouth of Jeremiah, He exclaims: "O! all you who pass by the way, come and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." (Lamentations 1, xii.) He drank the

cup of suffering and sorrow to the bitter dregs, not only to expiate our sins, but also to sanctify our sorrows and to teach us how to bear them.

Perhaps amid all the grand and beautiful characteristics of our Saviour's life, there is none more endearing to the human heart than His blessed compassion for the afflicted, the mourners and weepers. The instances of this trait in our Saviour's character, related in the gospel, speak to the heart with a sympathetic power which human language is impotent to command. We shall only refer to two of them. The first to which we wish to call attention is the case of the widow of Naim. As our Redeemer, accompanied by his disciples, approached, on one occasion, this little town, he met the funeral of the only son of a widow, as it proceeded slowly and mournfully toward the cemetery. There were in that funeral procession the usual circumstances that mark such an occasion—the kind-hearted and sympathetic neighbors,

the weeping relatives, the corpse stiff and cold in death, and there was the broken-hearted and widowed mother following the coffin in which her earthly joy and hope were enclosed. The sad spectacle was too much for the heart of Jesus; he was moved to deepest pity for this weeping, crushed and broken-hearted woman, and approaching her, He said: "O! woman, weep not." He then went to the bier and in a voice of command he said: "Young man, I say to thee, arise." Death heard the voice of the author of life and obeyed; the young man awoke into life and went home with his mother, to be the comfort and the staff of her old age.

The second instance of our Saviour's touching sympathy for the bereaved and the sorrowing which we shall adduce, is that which relates to the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. A beloved brother, the guardian, prop and pride of two orphan sisters, is torn from the family circle by the cruel hand of death; he is taken away in the prime of manhood, in the

midst of his usefulness, and at a time when his presence seemed essential to the well-being and comfort of his sisters, and he is now four days dead and buried away in the silent tomb. His place is vacant at the family hearth, there is a sad void in the homestead that cannot be filled up, there is a beloved presence wanting; and grief bitter and overpowering, and sorrow speechless and inexpressible, because too great for utterance have filled the souls of the bereaved and broken-hearted sisters. Our Lord came to console them in their heart-anguish and agony, and the sisters rushed out to meet Him, and in an outburst of passionate grief, and in those piteous accents that smite the heart, exclaimed: "O Lord, if thou hadst been here our brother would not have died. But now we know that whatever thou shalt ask of God, he will give it to Thee." To their earnest pleading, to supplications, aided by the silent but irresistible eloquence of tears our Lord replied in words of tenderest sympathy and hopefulness that can never be for-

gotten, and that have shone ever since like a rainbow of promise over Christian tombs: "Your brother shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life; every one that believeth in Me though he be dead, shall live, and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not taste death forever." And Jesus, seeing the grief of the disconsolate sisters, groaned in spirit and wept, and going to the tomb wherein Lazarus was laid, he cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." And presently, he that had been dead, came forth from the tomb a living man, and went home with his sisters." John 11. How touchingly these instances of our Saviour's tender compassion speak to the bereaved and stricken heart! What rays of blessed hope have they not ministered to those who have been widowed or orphaned by death! But whilst they are calculated to console all weepers, they have a special significance for those whom death has bereaved of their dear ones. Henceforward, if Christians mourn for the de-

parted ones, they mourn not without hope. They know that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life," and that those who die in His holy church, and at friendship with Him, will one day rise again to live forever in the Kingdom of God. Death, therefore, has not absolute dominion over their departed friends. These may sleep away for ages in their forgotten graves, but in the spring-time of the resurrection they will rise again in honor, in power and glory, to live with Christ in His eternal kingdom. This hope is laid up in the bosom of Christian mourners, and in every age and clime, has served to reconcile them to the death of their nearest and most beloved. It is thus that our blessed Lord has sublimated and sanctified sorrow and suffering. He became Himself a man of sorrows; He bore those sorrows without plaint or murmur, for "as a sheep before the shearers, so opened He not His mouth." In His agony in the garden, when His soul was sorrowful even unto death, He besought His Heavenly

Father that the chalice might pass away from Him, but He added: "nevertheless, let not My will, but Thine, be done." He has thus taught us, by His holy example, how to bear with patience and resignation the trials of life, and, by uniting them to His sufferings, how to make them expiatory and meritorious in the sight of His eternal Father. Thus, sorrow and suffering in the Christian system become a source of merit and of sanctification, and, though our hearts may break with uncontrollable grief, we may offer them to God, all wounded and bleeding though they be, and when thus offered, in union with the sorrows and the agonized heart of Jesus, they become most acceptable offerings in the sight of Heaven. But the example of our Lord on this point has not only instructed us how to bear our own trials and crosses with patience, but it has also taught us to be kind and compassionate to those who are in sorrow and affliction. He has given us an example that, as He has done, so also we

might do. And this blessed and merciful example has been followed during the whole life of His holy church. Wherever sorrows were to be comforted, wherever tears were to be dried, wherever pain was to be assuaged, wherever wounded and broken hearts were to be healed and bound up, there, men and women, consecrated to Christ and animated by his spirit and example, were to be found as ministering angels, happy to suffer and to die if only they could bring comfort and consolation to the suffering and sorrowing members of the crucified Redeemer. God alone can tell how much this sad world owes, in this respect, to the teachings and example of its Saviour.

There is another class for which our Lord entertained a special compassion and mercy, namely, sinners. In a spiritual sense they are blind and deaf, and lame, and sick and leprous. In the language of inspiration, they may consider themselves rich and made wealthy, and as having need of nothing; "but

they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apocalypse 3, xvii). They are poor, for they have lost their eternal inheritance. They are slaves, for they have lost the liberty of the children of God, and are bound by the servitude of Satan. "Amen, I say unto you," said Christ, "that whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." (John 8, xxxiv). They are spiritually dead, for they have lost the life of their souls. O! more wretched and more pitiable far than the blind, the lame and the deaf, are sinners who have lost the treasures of God's friendship, have forfeited their rights to Heaven, and have wrecked their innocence and destroyed the very life of their souls. Our Lord came primarily for the salvation of sinners, to seek and save that which was lost. The primary object of His coming was not to heal the diseases and ailments of the body, but to heal the diseases and wounds of the soul; was not to restore the life of the body, but to restore the lost life of the soul! If, then, the Saviour

wrought miracles for the healing of bodily diseases and the restoration of the dead to life, O! what miracles of mercy will He not work for the salvation and life of the imperishable soul, for the happiness, the endless bliss of this living image of God, this immortal being, the salvation of which is a greater work and a greater good than the creation of the material world, than the glories of the stars and all the beauties of the universe. Hence we find that his whole life was one divine effort for the conversion and salvation of the sinner. This was so markedly the case that the Pharisees reproached Him for it and stigmatized him as the friend of publicans and sinners. Whereupon our Lord replied: "Those that are well have not need of a physician, but those that are sick; going, therefore, learn what this meaneth. I wish mercy and not sacrifice, for I am come to call, not the just, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 15, xii-xiii).

He likens Himself to the good shepherd

who leaveth ninety-nine sheep in the desert and goes in search of the one that is lost, and declares "that there is joy in Heaven before the angels of God upon one sinner that doth penance more than ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke 15, vii). He is the Father of the prodigal. A certain man, says our Lord, had two sons, and one was a prodigal, and the prodigal, taking his share of the father's substance, went into a foreign country, and there wasted his fortune on riotous living. That country was scourged by a wasting famine and the prodigal was reduced to the necessity of feeding on the husks of swine. So far the prodigal was but the type and exemplification of the base ingratitude and deep degradation of the sinner. The poor prodigal entering into himself called to mind the home of his father, its pure and innocent joys and the plenty that abounded therein, and he said, "I will arise and go home to my father, and I will say to him, father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee; I am no

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more worthy to be called thy son, make me one of thy servants." And when the poor penitent returned, the father no longer remembered the injury that had been done him nor the base ingratitude of his erring son, but he received him with open arms and the heart of a father went out in pity and forgiveness to his poor returned child, all tattered and torn and travel-stained, but repentant, he restored him to the protection and the privileges of his home, and caused rejoicings to be made because "his son that had been dead was come to life again, had been lost and was found." (Luke 15). It is thus our Saviour treats repentant sinners. No matter how base and black their ingratitude, no matter how numerous and enormous their offenses, though their sins were as red as scarlet and as deep as crimson, though they were as numberless as the leaves of autumn, or as the sands of the sea-shore, the Father of the prodigal—Jesus Christ—will receive the returning and repentant sinners with open arms,

and will restore them their lost privileges and the friendship of God. His precious blood will blot out their sins from the book of God's recollection, and the tide of His infinite mercies will rise above their wickedest transgressions and drown them in eternal oblivion.

It would be too tedious to dwell on other instances of our Saviour's mercy to sinners as related in the Gospel, such as the forgiveness of Magdalen and of the woman taken in adultery. We may well say with St. John, that if all that our Lord said and did and suffered for the salvation of sinners were written, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written. (John 21, xxv). We shall only call attention to the last dread scene on Calvary. We know that our Saviour is there offered up as a victim for our sins. "The Lord, said the prophet, hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was

upon him and by his bruises we have been healed." Let us now ascend in spirit to the hill of Calvary to witness the scene that is there transpiring, to assist at the bloody but all-atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. He has already hung nearly three long hours on the ignominious gibbet, a spectacle to angels and to men. His life-blood is ebbing fast through the five wounds until the fountains of the heart are well-nigh exhausted. An awful darkness is stealing over Calvary's hill and wrapping it in its pitchy folds; the graves are being stirred with a strange life, for the dead are awaking from their sleep of ages, startled into life by the divine tragedy, and are about to walk through the streets of the holy city. At this awful moment the Jews cease not to mock and deride our dying Saviour and to scoff at His untold sorrows and abandonment. One would expect that our Lord in His justice would summon His angels to destroy those guilty wretches and rid the world of deicides, no longer worthy

to live. But no; our blessed Saviour, summoning His remaining energies, and turning up toward Heaven His eyes that were swimming in tears of agony and dim with the shadows of approaching death, made a last appeal for mercy, saying: "O Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and, bowing His head, He expired. His last prayer offered up with His dying breath upon the cross was for pardon and forgiveness for the greatest sinners, the most guilty criminals that ever profaned God's creation.

One drop of the precious blood of Jesus shed upon the cross would have been sufficient to redeem a thousand guilty worlds, and yet He poured it all out to the very last drop to prove to us the infinitude of His love. His precious blood atoned fully to the justice of God for the sins of mankind, it blotted out the handwriting of death that was against us and purchased us with a great price. His blood was shed for all the children of men,

from fallen Adam down to the last that will be born of woman. It ascended in its redeeming effects up through the centuries to the beginning of time, and will descend in a tide of mercies to the consummation of the world. The victim, it is true, was offered only on Calvary, but the blood of that victim bathed the world in its saving tide, and washed the shores of all the ages. It gave infinite honor and glory to God, made full atonement to the Divine justice, lifted up a fallen world and placed it once more on the plane of its immortal destinies; it redeemed mankind from the curse of the fall, liberated them from the bondage of Satan and restored them to the glorious freedom of the sons of God and to the heirship of the kingdom of Heaven. We may, therefore, truly and in deepest gratitude say with the Church: "*O certe necessarium adæ peccatum quod Christi morte deletum est.*" "*O felix culpa quæ talem et tantum meruit habere Redemptorem.*" "*O truly necessary sin of Adam which the*

death of Christ has blotted out." "O happy fault that merited such and so great a Redeemer."

Were we to speak with the tongues of men and of angels we would not convey an adequate idea of all the graces, mercies, and blessings conferred upon mankind by our Blessed Redeemer. We can only say with the Psalmist, that since His advent "the earth is filled with the mercy of the Lord." Jesus is, indeed, our God and our all, the life of our life and the treasure of our hearts; the Sovereign truth and the Supreme good. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the immovable anchor of our hope, the divine object of our charity; He is our life, our sweetness, and our hope here, and will, we humbly trust, be our exceeding great reward hereafter. He is everything to us, "for it would have profited us nothing," says the Church, "to be born if we had not been redeemed." O let us give Him the whole homage and service of our being; let us love Him

with our whole heart and soul, and mind, and strength. He is our God, let us adore and worship Him in spirit and in truth; He is our Redeemer; let us never cease to thank and praise Him, "for the Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction," (Apoc. 5, xi); He is our Father, let us give him the obedience of dutiful children. Let us give ourselves entirely to Him as He has given himself entirely for us. Let us often say to Him with St. Paul, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or prosecution, or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death nor life, . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8, xxxv-xxxix). There is but one thing, dearly beloved brethren, that can separate us from the love of Christ, and that is sin. This is the supreme evil, as God is the Supreme good. Between God and

sin there is an infinite distance, an invincible contradiction, an absolute opposition. Sin is the great enemy of God and man, it has filled Heaven with mourning, hell with wailings and lamentations, and the earth with untold miseries and calamities. It has brought pestilence, famine, sorrow and death into the world. It has caused all the afflictions that have fallen on mankind, all the sighs that have ever been heaved from the human bosom, all the tears that have ever fallen from the eyes of men, it has wrung tears even from the sacred eyes of Jesus himself, for if He wept over the grave of Lazarus and over the city of Jerusalem, it was because they symbolized souls ruined and lost by sin. It was sin which nailed Jesus to the cross and put Him to an ignominious death. And so enormous is sin in its intrinsic malice, and so injurious to God, that St. Paul does not hesitate to say that they who commit it "crucify again the Son of God and make a mockery of Him." (Hebrews, 6, vi). Since,

therefore, sin is the supreme evil, since it alone can separate us from Christ, and render all that He has done and suffered for us vain and fruitless, we should detest it with our whole heart and soul, we should sincerely repent of having ever committed it, and during our whole lives, we should do our utmost by sincere repentance and penitential works, and the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, to repair the injury done to God by our sins, to obtain forgiveness of them, and to obtain the grace of serving our Lord and Master in holiness and justice all our days.

To sum up all that we have said: Our Blessed Lord is for us, the Alpha and Omega, our first beginning and our last end; our life, our sweetness, and our hope. He is our Lord and our Saviour, the God of our hearts, and the God that is our portion forever. He is the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. He has spoken to men as no man had ever spoken; the infinite wisdom that

dwelt corporally in Him shone out on a sin-darkened world with the brightness and the power of a transfiguration. He has changed the whole current of human history, and reversed the whole order of ideas that men held most dear. He has explained the dark problems of human life, and solved its most perplexing mysteries. He has enlightened man's mind, and purified and sanctified his heart. He has created a new civilization, and introduced a new principle of government. He has raised up the family from the degradation inflicted on it by Paganism, and restored it to its legitimate position in the social order. The cruel wrongs of mankind He has sought to rectify, and the principles of eternal justice He has firmly established, for, with a Divine authority, He has taught the brotherhood and equality of man, and, at His words, millions of the oppressed and the enslaved have lifted up their heads, raised their fettered hands to Heaven, and begun to hope. Under the transforming power of His teach-

ing and example, the hungry have been fed, the naked clothed, the lonely and abandoned visited, the light of blessed hope has shone in the darkness of the dungeon, the prison doors have opened to captives unjustly detained, the tears of the afflicted have been dried up, the broken in heart have been healed, and the reign of Heaven-born charity, with all its blessed mercies and commiserations, has been inaugurated and perpetuated upon earth. The darkness of our place of exile He has lit up by the revelation of eternal and saving truths that will for ever illumine the whole firmament of time. He has atoned to the justice of God for the sins of men; Himself sinless, He took upon Himself the sins of the world, and washed them out in His precious blood. He died that man might live; He rose triumphant from the dead that man might one day rise glorious and immortal from the grave; in a word, He has redeemed and saved a lost and fallen world. And although after a time He withdrew His

visible presence from amongst men, and ascended into Heaven to resume His eternal throne, He has left behind Him on earth His Church to continue the work of human salvation and sanctification which He had inaugurated. He has made this kingdom of God on earth more vast and more enduring than any earthly empire. He has endowed it with an undying, immortal life; and although nations will disappear from the map of the world, and dynasties be overthrown, and the proudest thrones be shattered into fragments, and although the mightiest and greatest institutions of man will crumble away into decay and nothingness, and cover the earth with their ruins and wrecks, this kingdom of Christ on earth, upheld by the everlasting arms, shall live on forever in undying vigor, in enduring power, and undiminished splendor until that day when Time himself will look his last on a perishing world; when the sun, and moon, and stars will drop from the firmament, and when the curtain will fall for-

ever on the last act in the drama of man's mortal existence.

The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke
decay,

Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt
away ;

But fixed His word, His saving power re-
mains,

His realm forever lasts; our own Messiah
reigns.

The practical conclusions to be drawn from these reflections may be briefly summed up as follows:

1st. We should love our Lord Jesus Christ with our whole heart and soul, for He first loved us and delivered Himself for us, and, with St. Paul, we should count all things as valueless and vile, provided we gain Christ and abide in his love and friendship.

2d. We should value the salvation of our immortal souls above all things, and as the great end and object of our existence here, since Christ so prized them as to lay down his

life for them, and to purchase them even by the shedding of His precious blood; and in order to urge ourselves to labor every day for our salvation, we should frequently put to our hearts and consciences the momentous question of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his soul, or what exchange shall a man give for his soul." (Math. 16, xxviii).

3d. Instructed by the teachings and example of our blessed Lord, we should embrace poverty, toil, sorrows and afflictions as coming from the hand of God. We should accept them with humble and patient resignation to the Divine will, and should make use of them, in union with the merits of Christ, as occasions of merit and means of sanctification, "for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." (1 Peter, 2, xxi).

4th. After the example of Christ we should be charitable to the poor, tender and compassionate toward the sorrowing and afflicted,

kind and attentive to the sick, and forgiving and merciful to those who have injured us. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you covered me, sick and you visited me." (Math. 15, xxxv).

5th. We should detest and abhor sin with all the energy of our being, as it is the supreme evil, the great enemy of God and man, the cause of all the calamities that have scourged the earth, the fountain of all the bitter tears that have fallen, drop by drop, from the eyes of man, and the crucifier of the Son of God himself. We should heartily repent of our past sins and firmly resolve, with the assistance of God's grace, never again to fall into this dreadful evil. And, in order to avoid this evil of sin and to be able to do the good and to practice the virtues that God requires of us, we should make use of the means of grace that Christ in His mercy has instituted for this purpose, viz., fervent and constant

prayer, the frequent and worthy reception of the Sacraments, and pious and regular attendance at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. We should also avoid the occasions of sin, for they who love danger shall perish in it.

In conclusion, we should constantly cherish with deep and abiding gratitude the memory of all that our Blessed Lord did and suffered for us. His dear image should ever remain enshrined in our hearts, and His sacred name should be ever on our lips, our heart's affections should frequently find expression in the burning words of St. Augustine. "O beauty ever ancient and always new; too late have I known Thee! too late have I loved Thee!" and kneeling at the foot of the Crucifix we should frequently and lovingly say to our beloved Saviour:

" Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,

Let not Thy blood on earth be spent

Lo, at Thy feet I fainting lie,

Mine eyes upon thy wounds are bent.

Upon Thy streaming wounds my weary
eyes
Wait like the parched earth on April
skies.

“Wash me, and dry these bitter tears,
O let my heart no further roam,
’Tis Thine by vows and hopes and fears
Long since—O, call Thy wanderer home,
To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded
side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and
shame may hide.”

[THE END.]